

into the Treasury, either. That is how we treat retirement plans. What this is about is fundamental fairness.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Chairman, in my hometown a gentleman with an oxygen tank, very frail, very young, 55 to 60, comes up to me. He is himself a railroad retiree, and says, here is my wife. We need to pass or the Congress needs to pass railroad retirement reform so she will have her benefits when I am no longer here to support her.

That is what this legislation is about in protecting those widows, those families. There are plenty of letters from widows in my area. Mrs. Lohouse, help is on the way. You should get your full benefits.

(Mr. OBERSTAR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support for this bipartisan bill which has been carefully scrubbed by both the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Ways and Means on a totally bipartisan basis.

Let me emphasize, contrary to some of the assertions or one of the assertions that we have heard here today, the Railroad Retirement System is not only solvent, the Railroad Retirement Board actuary has certified that it is overfunded. Indeed, that is the reason why or one of the reasons why we are able to move with this legislation today.

Indeed, this legislation also requires a 4-year minimum reserve in the trust fund. The money that is paid out is money which is paid into the system by the railroad workers and by the railroad employers, the railroad companies.

This legislation corrects a grievous wrong, particularly as it applies to the widows of this system. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it was over 2 years ago when the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN) initiated the first hearing on this issue. Thanks to his diligence and then the follow-up of so many on both sides of the aisle, we find ourselves here today.

I also want to emphasize that at filing time of this report we had 306 cosponsors, and we have had many, many more calls since that time to try to cosponsor, but of course once the report is filed, one cannot.

We have a large majority of Republicans, a large majority of Democrats. This is a totally bipartisan bill. It is good for railroad families, it is good for America, and I urge strong support of this legislation.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4844 is long overdue. Railroad labor, widows and widowers will gain enhanced benefits as a result of this self-financing legislation. I am

particularly thrilled that the 4.3 cents/gallon tax repeal is not a part of this legislation.

This provision would have essentially eroded support for the measure and would have thrown the numbers into disarray. H.R. 4844 allows railroad retirement assets to be invested in private securities, reduces the payroll tax on railroads, and reduces vesting from ten to five years for both Tier I and Tier II benefits.

The bill also increases survivor benefits to widows and widowers of rail workers and Mr. Speaker, this is what legislation on behalf of the people is about. I urge strong support for H.R. 4844.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to enthusiastically support H.R. 4844, the Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act of 2000.

The Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act of 2000 is historic legislation that will improve the lives of railroad workers and their spouses. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important bipartisan bill and am pleased to cast my vote in favor of this legislation today. This bill will guarantee a better standard of retirement for the nearly 3,500 retirees in my district and for all future retirees and their families.

Under H.R. 4844, the quality of life for widows and widowers are significantly improved. Under current law, spouses are limited to one-half of the deceased employee's Tier 2 benefits. However, under this legislation, this bill increases Tier 2 benefits for widows and widowers to 100 percent of the deceased employee's benefits on the date of death. Thus, widowers and widows will continue to receive the same benefits as their spouse received prior to death. Widows should not have to face a loss of income in addition to the death of a spouse. This bill ensures that is no longer a reality—widows will receive full benefits under this legislation.

Additionally, H.R. 4844 reduces the years of covered service to be vested in the railroad retirement system from the present 10 years to 5 years. Ten years is too long to wait to be vested in the railroad retirement system, and this legislation corrects this problem. Further, the retirement age is reduced from 62 to 60. By reducing this age, workers are given the opportunity to retire earlier without a corresponding loss of benefits.

H.R. 4844 also fixes the cap on the "maximum benefit." Present law limits the total amount of monthly railroad retirement benefits payable to an employee and an employee's spouse at the time the employee's annuity payout begins. The Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 200 removes this cap so that there is not a maximum benefit limit.

Mr. Speaker, this is good legislation that will give working families more retirement security. I commend Chairmen SHAW and ARCHER for their leadership on this bill and ask for all of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4844, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 391, nays 25, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 459]

YEAS—391

Abercrombie	Deutsch	Jackson (IL)
Aderholt	Diaz-Balart	Jackson-Lee
Allen	Dickey	(TX)
Andrews	Dicks	Jenkins
Armey	Dingell	John
Baca	Dixon	Johnson (CT)
Bachus	Doggett	Johnson, E. B.
Baird	Dooley	Jones (NC)
Baker	Doolittle	Jones (OH)
Baldacci	Doyle	Kanjorski
Baldwin	Dreier	Kaptur
Ballenger	Duncan	Kelly
Barcia	Dunn	Kennedy
Barr	Edwards	Kildee
Barrett (NE)	Ehlers	Kilpatrick
Barrett (WI)	Ehrlich	Kind (WI)
Bartlett	Emerson	King (NY)
Barton	Engel	Kingston
Bass	English	Klecza
Bateman	Eshoo	Knollenberg
Becerra	Etheridge	Kolbe
Bentsen	Evans	Kucinich
Bereuter	Everett	Kuykendall
Berkley	Ewing	LaFalce
Berman	Farr	LaHood
Berry	Fattah	Lampson
Biggert	Filner	Lantos
Bilbray	Fletcher	Larson
Bilirakis	Foley	Latham
Bishop	Forbes	LaTourette
Blagojevich	Ford	Leach
Bliley	Fossella	Lee
Blumenauer	Fowler	Levin
Blunt	Frank (MA)	Lewis (CA)
Boehlert	Franks (NJ)	Lewis (GA)
Boehner	Frelinghuysen	Lewis (KY)
Bonilla	Frost	Linder
Bonior	Gallegly	Lipinski
Bono	Ganske	LoBiondo
Borski	Gejdenson	Lofgren
Boswell	Gekas	Lowe
Boucher	Gephardt	Lucas (KY)
Boyd	Gibbons	Lucas (OK)
Brady (PA)	Gilchrest	Luther
Brady (TX)	Gillmor	Maloney (CT)
Brown (FL)	Gilman	Maloney (NY)
Brown (OH)	Gonzalez	Manzullo
Bryant	Goode	Markey
Burr	Goodlatte	Martinez
Burton	Goodling	Mascara
Buyer	Gordon	Matsui
Calvert	Goss	McCarthy (MO)
Camp	Graham	McCarthy (NY)
Canady	Granger	McCrery
Capps	Green (TX)	McGovern
Capuano	Green (WI)	McHugh
Cardin	Greenwood	McInnis
Carson	Gutierrez	McIntyre
Castle	Gutknecht	McKeon
Chambliss	Hall (OH)	McKinney
Chenoweth-Hage	Hall (TX)	McNulty
Clay	Hansen	Meehan
Clayton	Hastings (FL)	Meek (FL)
Clement	Hastings (WA)	Menendez
Clyburn	Hayes	Metcalfe
Coble	Hayworth	Mica
Collins	Herger	Millender-
Combest	Hill (IN)	McDonald
Condit	Hill (MT)	Miller, Gary
Conyers	Hilleary	Miller, George
Cook	Hilliard	Minge
Cooksey	Hinchey	Mink
Costello	Hinojosa	Moakley
Coyne	Hobson	Mollohan
Cramer	Hoeffel	Moore
Crowley	Hoekstra	Moran (KS)
Cubin	Holt	Moran (VA)
Cummings	Hooley	Morella
Cunningham	Horn	Murtha
Danner	Houghton	Myrick
Davis (IL)	Hoyer	Nadler
Davis (VA)	Hulshof	Napolitano
Deal	Hutchinson	Neal
DeFazio	Hyde	Nethercutt
DeGette	Inslee	Ney
DeLauro	Isakson	Northup
DeMint	Istook	Norwood